

## Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

----- 028677

O R 081508Z MAY 76 ZFF-4

FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7843

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 AMMAN 2472

EXDIS

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON FROM PICKERING

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, JO, US

SUBJECT: JORDAN AIR DEFENSE

REF: (A) JIDDA 3216, (B) JIDDA 3268

SUMMARY: WE BELIEVE JORDAN NOW WILL BEGIN SERIOUS EXPLORATION OF OBTAINING AIR DEFENSE WEAPONS SYSTEM FROM SOVIETS. SAUDIS APPARENTLY ARE DUG IN AT \$300 MILLION; JORDANIANS FEEL PRESSED, SUSPICIOUS, AND RESIGNED TO "FATE"; AND SOVIETS HAVE GOLDEN CHANCE TO MAKE GENEROUS OFFER. THERE SEEMS LITTLE ELSE WE CAN DO NOW TO BREAK IMPASSE -- WE HAVE CONSIDERED HUSSEIN VISIT TO RIYADH, PRESIDENTIAL LETTER TO HUSSEIN AND KHALID, GREATER US PARTICIPATION IN FUNDING, OR REDUC-TION IN HAWK/VULCAN SIZE, ALTHOUGH WE MIGHT WANT TO CONSIDER THEM AS EVENTS DEVELOP LATER. MEANWHILE, GOJ'S APPROACH TO SOVIETS LIKELY TO BECOME KNOWN TO JAF AND PUBLIC SOON -- MAYBE LATER THIS WEEK. IN ASSIGNING BLAME, THEY ARE LIKELY TO ALLOW SOME HEAT TO FLOW OUR WAY (WITH AN EYE ON CONTINUED SAUDI SUB-SIDIES), BUT GOJ SEEMS INTENT ON TRYING TO AVOID, FROM ITS SIDE, PRECIPITATING A BREAK DOWN IN RELATIONS WITH U.S. WE HOPE WE CAN LIMIT INITIALLY OUR PUBLIC COMMENT TO FACTUAL CORRECTIONS OF DISTORTIONS AND REPEAT THAT OUR OFFER TO SELL AIR DEFENSE EQUIPMENT TO JORDAN HAS  
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NOT CLOSED. JORDANIANS ALMOST CERTAINLY WILL TRY TO KEEP

OPEN AS MANY LINES TO US AS THEY CAN (INCLUDING AID, ASSISTANCE, AND HIGH LEVEL COMMUNICATION). OUR JUDGMENT IS THAT OUR POSTURE SHOULD BE SOMEWHAT PARALLEL -- NOT BE THE FIRST TO CLOSE DOWN ON THE RELATIONSHIP -- BUT OF COURSE WE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO CONTROL COMPLETELY PUBLIC AND CONGRESSIONAL REACTIONS, PARTICULARLY IF JORDANIAN PUBLIC REACTION AGAINST U.S. OVERSTEPS SOME OF THE ABOVE BOUNDS -- A DEVELOPMENT WHICH IS NOT EASY TO PREDICT, BUT WHICH SHOULD NOT COME AS A SURPRISE TO WASHINGTON. NEGATIVE INJUNCTIONS FROM US AGAINST SOVIET TIES WITHOUT CONSTRUCTIVE OPEIONS WOULD NOT BE PRODUCTIVE, BOTH IN SHORT RUN AND IN KEEPING OPEN OPPORTUNITIES TO MODERATE GOJ BEHAVIOR THAT MAY BE FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD HOWEVER SLIM THOSE OPPORTUNITIES MIGHT APPEAR AT PRESENT. END SUMMARY.

1. IN REVIEWING PRESENT SITUATION WE BELIEVE WE ARE FACED WITH TWO MAIN TASKS -- HANDLING THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM OF JORDAN'S OPENING STEPS WITH THE SOVIET UNION, AND A REVIEW OF POSSIBLE LONGER RANGE CONSEQUENCES.

2. OUR PRESENT ASSESSMENT IS:

(A) SAUDIS ARE NOT LIKELY UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES TO CHANGE THEIR MIND ABOUT FINANCING MORE THAN \$300 MILLION FOR JORDAN AIR DEFENSE FROM THE WEST;

(B) JORDANIANS, NOW BELIEVING THEY ARE BEING DRIVEN BY SAUDIS, PERHAPS U.S. AND UNDOUBTEDLY BY "FATE", WILL EXPLORE WHAT SOVIETS HAVE TO OFFER;

(C) SOVIETS HAVE LITTLE TO LOSE AND MUCH TO GAIN BY MAKING A GENEROUS OFFER; POSSIBLE PALESTINIAN OBJECTION COULD BE HANDLED BY TELLING PLO THAT IT CAN LOOK FORWARD TO INHERITING ALL OF THAT EQUIPMENT SOME DAY AND THAT ENHANCED SOVIET INFLUENCE IN JORDAN WILL BE USED TO PROTECT THEM AND TO PROMOTE THEIR CAUSE;

(D) U.S. IS NOT ABLE TO COME UP WITH ANOTHER ALTERNATIVE LIKELY TO BE CLOSE TO WHAT JORDAN AND SAUDI ARABIA COULD CONSIDER ACCEPTABLE;

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(E) JORDANIANS AND SAUDIS HAVE BOTH HANDLED THEIR RELATIONS WITH EACH OTHER IN A WAY THAT, WHILE MAKING CLEAR TO EACH OTHER THEIR BASIC OBJECTIVES (JORDAN TO GET AIR DEFENSE; SAUDIS TO CUT DOWN ON JORDAN'S APPROACH TO SYRIA, THE COMMUNISTS AND OTHER ARAB RADICALS), HAS IN ITS IMPLEMENTATION FORCED EACH SIDE TO MOVE TOWARD STEPS WHICH MAKE THE ATTAINMENT OF ITS OBJECTIVES LESS

REALIZABLE. WE HAVE THUS A MEXICAN STAND-OFF WITH EACH SIDE HEADING AWAY FROM THE POSITIVE STEPS LIKELY TO BRING ABOUT A RESOLUTION OF THE DIFFERENCES. UPPING THE ANTE AT EACH STAGE HAS ALSO FORCED THE OTHER SIDE TO PUT UP ITS BET OR SUFFER THE INDIGNITY AND HUMILIATION OF COLLAPSE. SAUDIS CAN WIN ON FINANCIAL SIDE, BUT WILL PROBABLY LOSE POLITICAL OBJECTIVES; HUSSEIN, HOWEVER AGONIZED, WILL RESPOND TO PUSH OF "FATE" TOWARD THE SOVIET UNION AND HOPE AT SAME TIME TO KEEP KINGDOM AND U.S. AND SAUDI RELATIONS IN ORDER WHILE DOING SO.

(F) WE SEE NO NEW COMBINATION OF MOVES LIKELY TO BREAK THROUGH THE PRESENT IMPASSE. WE HAVE CONSIDERED A HUSSEIN VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA, U.S. PRESIDENTIAL LETTER TO HUSSEIN AND KHALID LAYING OUT OUR CONCERNS AND

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W  
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O R 081508Z MAY 76 ZFF-4  
FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7844  
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 AMMAN 2472

EXDIS

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON FROM PICKERING

SUGGESTING A POSSIBLE SOLUTION, U.S. PARTICIPATION TO A GREATER DEGREE IN FUNDING, OR OBTAINING JORDANIAN AGREEMENT TO A REDUCTION IN SIZE OF SYSTEM JORDAN ACCEPTS. HOWEVER, EACH OF THESE MIGHT PRESENT US A POSSIBLE TACTICAL ALTERNATIVE AT A LATER STAGE, IF INDEED THERE ARE TO BE SUCH STAGES.

3. FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, JORDANIANS WILL FACE A DIFFICULT PROBLEM IN HANDLING THEIR APPROACH TO THE SOVIETS. THEY WILL HAVE TO TELL THE SOVIET AIR FORCE

MISSION BY MONDAY, MAY 10, AT THE LATEST THEY WANT TO TALK TO THEM ABOUT AIR DEFENSE. THIS CANNOT BE HIDDEN LONG FROM THEIR OWN ARMY AND PUBLIC. THEY WILL THEN BE CALLED UPON TO SAY SOMETHING ABOUT HOW SITUATION DEVELOPED. WHAT THEY SAY IS LIKELY TO BE KEYED TO SAUDI REACTION; HOWEVE IN THE PAS THEY HAVE NOT SPARED THE SAUDIS IN POINTING THE FINGER. TO HELP AVOID SAUDI RETALIATION IN TERMS OF FUNDING FOR JORDAN AND POLITICAL ISSUES, JORDAN WILL, WE SUSPECT, BE INCLINED TO TAKE A "MORE IN SORROW THAN ANGER" APPROACH. BUT WE OF COURSE CANNOT BE SURE. ALSO, THEIR PUBLIC STATEMENTS MAY ASSOCIATE US IN SOME MEASURE AS BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR HAVING TO GO TO THE SOVIETS (ALLEGED PRICE INCREASES, SLOW MOVEMENT IN REGARD TO SAUDIS, ETC.) PARTLY BECAUSE IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD THERE IS AN IRRESISTABLE URGE TO FIND  
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SCAPEGOATS, PARTLY TO PLEASE SOVIETS, AND PARTLY PERHAPS TO TAKE THE HEAT OFF THE SAUDIS. THIS TENDENCY WILL BE COINTERBALANCED HOWEVER BY ACTION IN ACCORD WITH RIFAI'S STATEMENT TO ME THAT JORDAN WILL NOT BE THE FIRST TO UPSET RELATIONS WITH U.S. OVER THIS ISSUE.

4. GIVEN THESE CONSIDERATIONS, MY RECOMMENDATIONS WOULD BE TO HOLD PUBLIC COMMENT TO MINIMUM IF POSSIBLE, ANSWERING ONLY IN MOST FACTUAL TERMS ANY ISSUES THAT HAVE BEEN DISTORTED -- SUCH AS COSTS OF SYSTEM -- AND MAKE POINT THAT WHILE WE HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH BOTH PARTIES, COMMENTS SHOULD COME FROM PARTIES INVOLVED ABOUT THE PRESENT ISSUE. WE MIGHT SAY ALSO U.S. HAS KEPT OPEN POSSIBILITY OF SALE AND BOTH PARTIES KNOW U.S. POSITION. WE BELIEVE THERE WILL BE HEAVY PRESS ATTENTION ON ANY JORDANIAN FINAL ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT GOING TO THE SOVIETS. ISRAELI REACTIONS ARE LIKELY TO BE SHARP AND WILL MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR US TO AVOID BEING DRAWN IN. WE LEAVE TO DEPARTMENT WHAT TO DO ON THIS POINT, BUT HOPE OF COURSE THAT PROBLEM CAN BE CONTAINED, NOT FURTHER AGGRAVATED BY THIS FACTOR.

5. BEYOND THE IMMEDIATE, THERE ARE ENOUGH UNCERTAIN FACTORS NOT TO TRY TO MAKE PREDICTIONS OR FIRM SUGGESTIONS. WE EXPECT JORDANIANS WILL TRY TO KEEP OPEN AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE THEIR LINES TO US AND THAT THEY WILL VALUE EVEN MORE HIGHLY OUR AID AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AND WANT TO KEEP THEM OPERATING. HERE WE SHOULD CONSIDER ALSO THE POSTURE OF "NO FURST USE" OF RETALIATION. AND WHILE BUYING OR GETTING FREE AN AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM FROM THE SOVIET UNION IS NOT LIKE GETTING 20 MILLION DOZEN EGGS EACH YEAR FROM BULGARIA, JORDANIANS WOULD LIKE TO KEEP US ALL AS CLOSE AS THEY POSSIBLY CAN

TO THE WESTERN BENIGN PERSPECTIVE ON EGG DEALS IN OUR ON-  
GOING REACTIONS TO THE EVOLVING AIR DEFENSE RELATIONSHIP  
WITH THE SOVIETS. THEY MAY ALSO WANT TO USE SOME SYRIAN  
COVER FOR WHATEVER THEY DO IN THE HOPE IT WILL TAKE  
SOME OF THE CURSE OFF THE INEVITABLE HEAVY SOVIET  
INVOLVEMENT. TOO, THEY MAY STILL HOPE FOR SOME  
REVERSAL DOWN THE LINE, AND OUR VIEW IS THAT WE SHOULD  
KEEP WHATEVER CARDS WE NOW HAVE FOR A POSSIBLE FUTURE  
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PLAY TO REVIVE THE CURRENT PHASED APPROACH TO JORDAN  
AIR DEFENSE RATHER THAN FOR ANOTHER EFFORT NOW WITH  
THE SAUDIS, GIVEN PRESENT DUG-IN STANCE IN BOTH AMMAN  
AND RIYADH. WE RECOGNIZE OF COURSE THAT THERE IS SOME  
REASONABLE CHANCE ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO PLAY THESE  
CARDS MAY NEVER ARISE.

6. FINALLY, WE BELIEVE OUR CURRENT STRATEGY OF TRYING  
TO KEEP OPEN AN OPTION TO PROVIDE A BASIC SYSTEM FOR  
THE KING WHILE AT SAME TIME WARNING HIM AWAY FROM SOVIETS  
IS STILL CORRECT APPROACH. WE SEE NO VALUE NOW IN EMPTY  
INJUNCTIONS TO HIM IN THE ABSENCE OF CONSTRUCTIVE PROPOSALS  
-- INJUNCTIONS WHICH COULD ONLY HAVE THE EFFECT OF  
IMPELLING HIM FURTHER ALONG A COURSE TOWARDS THE  
SOVIETS. WE BELIEVE HOWEVER THERE MAY STILL BE  
OPPORTUNITIES TO USE OUR BASIC STRATEGY IN THE FUTURE  
AND WE SHOULD DO ALL WE CAN, IN LIGHT OF JORDANIAN RE-  
ACTIONS, TO KEEP OUR WAY OPEN TO THESE POSSIBLE FUTURE  
OPTIONS.

7. SEPTTEL ADDRESSES NARROW QUESTION OF WHAT WE TELL  
JORDANIANS (IF ANYTHING) ABOUT OUR MOST RECENT TALKS WITH  
SAUDIS.  
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